

3. THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

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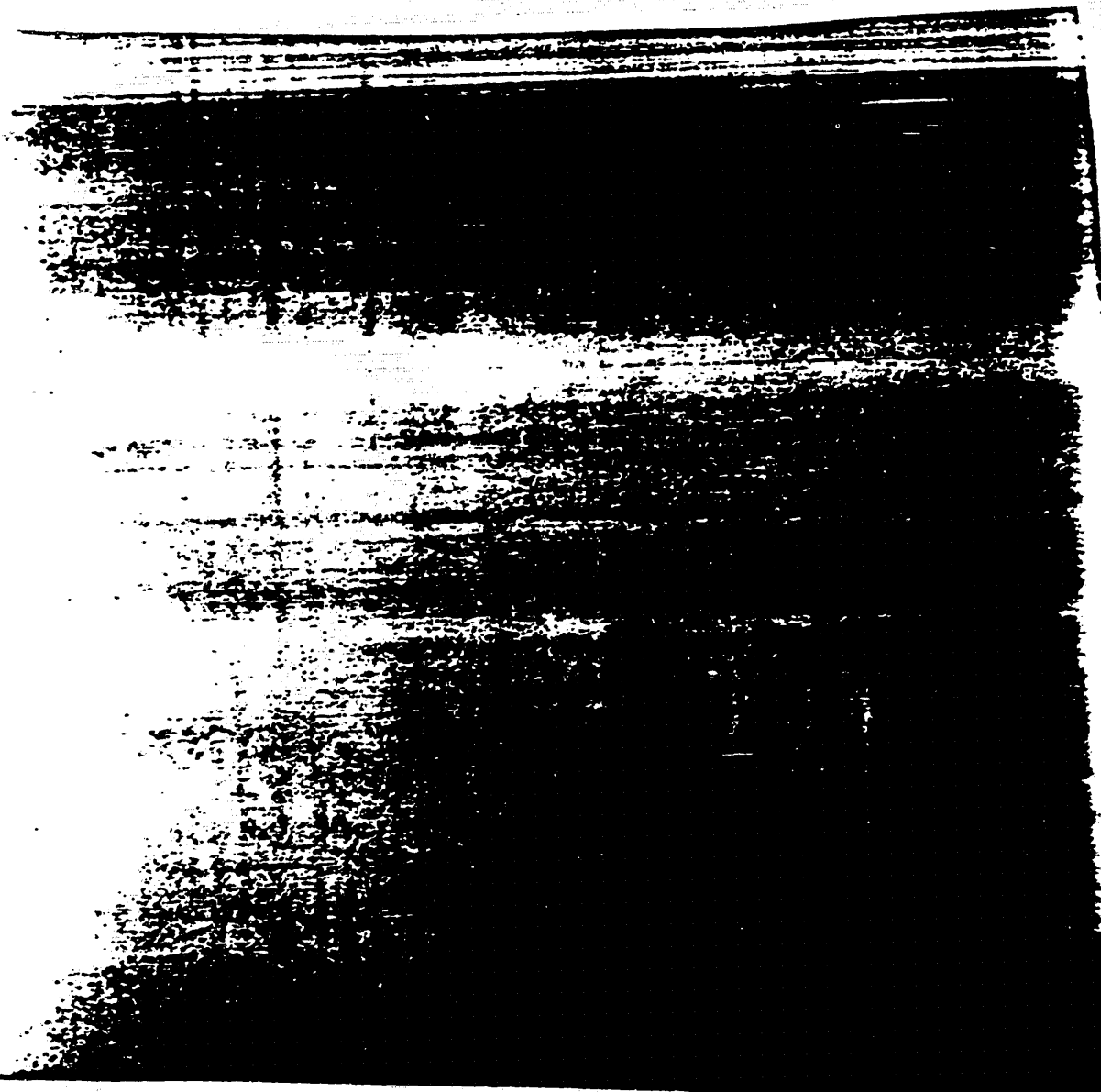
The USSR's occupation of Afghanistan continues unabated with the Soviets consolidating their positions and readying themselves for further operations. We believe that the key motivation that propelled Moscow's move was to bring its long-standing strategic goals closer within reach. Control of Afghanistan would be a major step toward overland access to the Indian Ocean and to domination of the Asian sub-continent, which in turn would place the Soviets in a position for drawing the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf into their orbit of power.

Although the Soviet intention to gain control of Afghanistan via a local Communist regime became increasingly evident after the April 1978 coup, the timing of the invasion may have been determined by developments within the country.

To assess some of the implications of the 24 December invasion we review the developments that led to Soviet military intervention.

The new Afghan leaders, however, failed to consolidate their position. Taraki and strongman Amin broke with the Parcham faction of the party and ruthlessly purged the bureaucratic and military officer corps, thereby narrowing their already limited power base. Nor were they able to cope effectively with the growing rebellion of the various Moslem tribes.

The March 1979 uprising in the western Afghan city of Herat probably deepened Soviet concerns.



The broader implications of the Soviet invasion, especially if the Soviets succeed in containing the rebellion, lie in the significantly enhanced threat of destabilization to the countries of the region, notably Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing countries. Given the continued dependence on Middle East oil by the US and its allies, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan translates into a direct threat to the West. [REDACTED]